

TarraWarra Museum of Art unveils the permanent installation of Callum Morton's *Valhalla*.



Callum Morton *Valhalla* 2007 (detail)

steel, polystyrene, epoxy resin, silicon, marble, glass, wood, acrylic paint, lights, sound, motor, smoke
TarraWarra Museum of Art collection, Acquired 2016.

Callum Morton's architecturally-inspired installation *Valhalla* has been given a permanent home at TarraWarra Museum of Art.

Originally created for the 52nd Venice Biennale (La Biennale di Venezia) in 2007 as part of Australia's official participation, the work was acquired by the Museum last year.

Valhalla has been installed at the entrance to the TarraWarra grounds, sitting resplendently on the crest of a hill, greeting visitors as they arrive.

Victoria Lynn, Director, says the new installation continues TarraWarra Museum of Art's exploration of the lively exchange between art, place and ideas.

"Callum Morton's *Valhalla* actively engages with the history of modernism, the world around us, and the interface of a public interior with the exterior of a private home.

"Located nearby to Clement Meadmore's sculpture *Awakening*, Morton's installation enhances our commitment to seeing the past through the filter of the present.

MEDIA RELEASE

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TARRAWARRA
MUSEUM
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"While the Meadmore work celebrates modernist abstraction, Morton's *Valhalla* addresses modernism in ruins," Ms Lynn said.

The work is a three-quarter scale remake of Morton's childhood home, which had been designed by the artist's architect father. The external walls appear to be burned and damaged. Inside is a pristine corporate foyer with three lift doors. When you press the button of the lift, the lights flicker and the lifts rumble, while at times an attendant may mop the floor or sit silently staring into space. It is an anxious space. On the outside, smoke and lights erupt from the work.

In Norse mythology, Valhalla is the hall of the slain, the place where souls killed in battle gather before joining those who died long before.

The work was conceived in the wake of the destruction of Afghanistan by the Taliban during the occupation by Western forces, and was prompted by the artist's discovery that his childhood home had been pulled down by its new owners.

Callum Morton says the siting and assemblage of the work at TarraWarra has been a significant undertaking.

He notes influences drawn from art history and literature, stating "*Valhalla* perched on a hill in this context, can be read as a type of ruin or folly set in an idyllic landscape, which of course was a staple of Romantic Landscape Painting and was part of what has been referred to as 'ruin lust', a phenomena that reached its peak in the 18th Century.

"As a modern ruin however the hope is that *Valhalla* takes on a more brooding and less nostalgic presence, invoking relationships to global destruction, to the modern wastelands of Eliot and the post-apocalyptic landscapes of Ballard and Smithson. It has always been important for me also that this work collapses a personal history (my own) with our collective history," Mr Morton said.

Valhalla was previously exhibited both as part of Australia's representation in the Venice Biennale (La Biennale di Venezia), Venice, Italy, June - November 2007 at Palazzo Zenobio, and in the Melbourne International Arts Festival, 9th - 24th October, 2009 at the Arts Centre forecourt.

"It's interesting to see how the installation works in the context at TarraWarra. There's the connection to the history of the ruin and something of the monumental invisibility that it had in Venice. The siting at TarraWarra exaggerates the sense of discovery when you encounter the contained corporate atrium space on the inside," Mr Morton said.

The *Valhalla* installation will be formally launched Sunday 3 December from 3:00 to 5:00pm.

ENDS.

To arrange interviews with Victoria Lynn and Callum Morton, and for supply of images please contact:

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Biography: Callum Morton

Born Montreal, Canada 1965 and lives and works in Melbourne, Australia

Callum Morton has exhibited nationally and internationally since 1990. His work has consistently addressed the 'architecture of experience', the moment of encounter between viewer and object, or viewer and built environment. Morton focuses on the relationship between private and public space, between reality and illusion.

Callum Morton is currently Professor of Fine Art at Monash Art Design & Architecture, Monash University, Melbourne. In 2013, he was awarded the Redlands Konica Minolta Art Prize.

His works are held in every major state collection in Australia, as well as private collections including those of the Lyon Housemuseum, Melbourne; TarraWarra Museum of Art, Victoria; the Michael Buxton Contemporary Australian Art Collection, Melbourne; and the Museum of Old and New Art, Tasmania.

Background:

Valhalla's installation at TarraWarra Museum of Art has taken almost four months to complete – from the beginning of civil works to its opening.

As the artist initially conceived of and developed the work for temporary display, a great deal of work has gone into its permanent installation on the TarraWarra grounds, including:

- Acquiring the work for the TarraWarra Museum of Art collection in 2016;
- Undertaking a Geotechnical report of the site & securing a planning permit for the installation;
- Delivering the existing components of the work to site in two large shipping containers;
- Installing electrical cabling from the Museum to the *Valhalla* site via underground boring so that three phase power can be run for the air conditioning, security cameras, lighting and smoke effects;
- Excavating and levelling the chosen site and installing agricultural & storm water drainage;
- Constructing a concrete slab as a permanent base for the work;
- Treating the steel structure and existing components to ensure the work's longevity;
- Final landscaping around the work – including sourcing approx. 250 cubic metres of fill and topsoil to create the incline, seeding, laying of grass and planting.
- Installing over 80 square metres of white tiles in the interior

Over 30 staff, contractors & sub-contractors from all areas have been engaged and on site over the course of the installation – including the artist and artist's studio staff, Museum and TarraWarra grounds staff, construction managers, architects, engineers, electricians, landscapers and painters.